



**UNHCR**

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees  
Haut Commissariat des Nations Unies pour les réfugiés

R0174884

UNHCR

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05 February 2002

Natra/Our code: PRL 09.04 (ICTY)

Re: **Data concerning refugees from Kosovo  
in 1999**

Dear Mr. Blewitt:

Your office has asked for my assistance to explain data published by UNHCR in 1999 regarding refugees from Kosovo.

As part of its mandate to protect and coordinate the delivery of humanitarian aid to persons affected by the armed conflict in the former Yugoslavia, UNHCR has been responsible to collect from time to time data about the number and condition of displaced persons and refugees so affected. Ordinarily, UNHCR publishes that data.

In 1999 I was the head of the unit responsible for operations in the Former Yugoslavia and was responsible for overseeing the collection of statistical information relating to those operations.

As in its operations worldwide, UNHCR relied on a variety of sources to compile statistical data linked to the Kosovo refugee crisis. In addition to the data collected by our UNHCR field staff, we also used, after reviewing it for reliability and accuracy, information obtained from local government officials, the Red Cross and non-governmental organisations in the area.

It should be understood that some of the data relating to refugees or displaced persons quoted by UNHCR is based on estimates, and not actual head counts. For example, there were times in Kosovo in 1999 when the volume of refugees crossing the border at any one point was so great that it was impossible to do an actual head count. Under those circumstances we used methods to estimate that have proved reliable in the past. We have found, for example, that we can reliably count the number and type of vehicles crossing the border, and extrapolate the number of refugees by using an average figure of passengers.

Mr. Graham T. Blewitt  
Deputy Prosecutor  
International Criminal Tribunal  
for the Former Yugoslavia  
P.O. Box 13888  
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UNHCR completed a statistical overview of Kosovar refugees and asylum seekers. In this survey we estimated that by the end of October 1998 some 285,000 Kosovars were displaced, either internally or in countries close to or neighbouring Kosovo, as a result of the ongoing conflict. Of these, some 200,000 remained within Kosovo. (See Attachment 1. "Kosovo Displacement Statistics, March 1998 to 24 March 1999".)

By 23 March 1999, UNHCR estimates that there were approximately 349,000 displaced Kosovars, of which 260,000 were internally displaced persons remaining within Kosovo. We have no basis on which to estimate how many of these internally displaced persons left the province after 23 March 1999. The UNHCR staff left Kosovo on 24 March 1999, the decision having been made that it was unsafe to remain in light of the escalating armed conflict.

From 24 March 1999, UNHCR made daily counts of Kosovars who crossed the borders. Attachment 2, "Summary of Kosovo Displacement Statistics, UNHCR Estimates, 23 March 1999 to 10 June 1999" sets forth the cumulative caseload of Kosovar refugees in Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYR Macedonia), and Montenegro.

The figures quoted for 23 March 1999 are the cumulative figures as recorded on that day. Because of the sudden massive increase of numbers of refugees leaving Kosovo from 24 March 1999, the count was difficult to make for the next several days. By 30 March 1999 the cumulative figure had been re established, based on the cumulative totals in the republics and countries that shared a border with Kosovo, and from then on the cumulative total is shown on a daily basis.

Attachment 3, daily statistics on "Kosovo Displacement and Return: UNHCR Estimates", shows a more detailed record of the refugee movement. This shows exit numbers from Kosovo from 1 April 1999 to 6 July 1999, with the exception of 2 to 10 April 1999, and return numbers from 15 June 1999 to 6 July 1999. Each entry refers to data collected on the previous day.



In March 1999, UNHCR already had offices in Skopje, FYR Macedonia; Tirana, Albania; Podgorica, Montenegro; and Belgrade, Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. In March we established a permanent UNHCR presence in Kukes, and near Qafe Prushit and Morane, Albania. These were recognised main crossing points into Albania from Kosovo. We also monitored refugees crossing at the Blace border crossing into FYR Macedonia.

Our staff in the refugee camps estimated numbers of refugees. We checked our estimates by assessing the amount of food required each day, and in consultation with other humanitarian organisations working in the camps. Later, we attempted to estimate the number of Kosovars who returned to the province after the NATO forces entered in June 1999. These figures confirmed our initial assessments.

Many of our records on the Kosovo crisis, which were published by our Public Information Section, were made available on our website.

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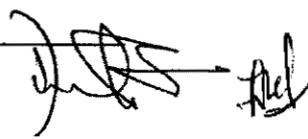
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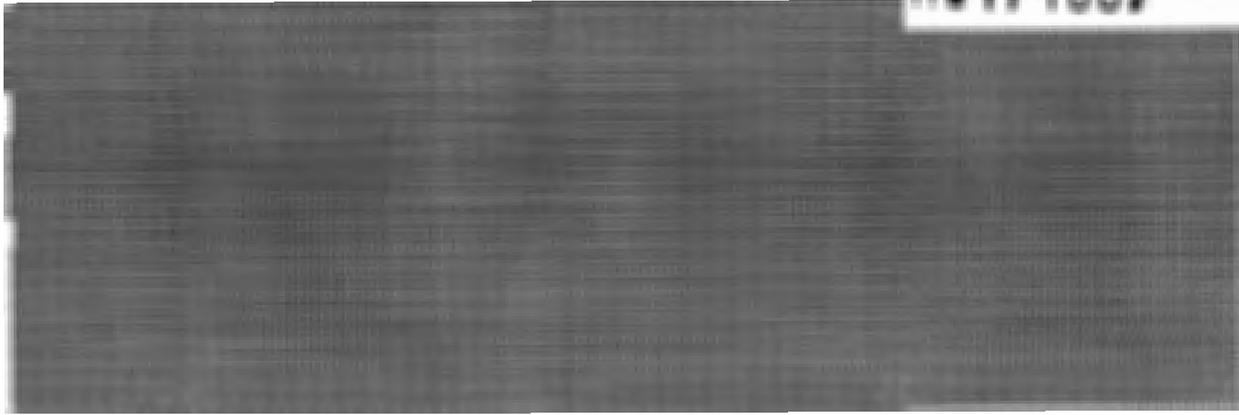
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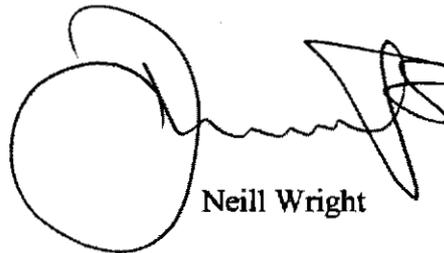




In summary, from 24 March 1999 through 10 June 1999, an estimated 860,000 Kosovars left Kosovo. Of these, some 444,600 fled to Albania, some 345,500 to FYR Macedonia, and 69,000 to Montenegro. Almost half of these, some 400,000 Kosovars left between 24 March and 6 April 1999. The vast majority were Kosovo Albanians. Moreover, some 60,000 Kosovo Serbs and other ethnic groups such as Roma were reported in Serbia and Montenegro.

I understand that this letter, and the attached UNHCR published documents to which it refers, may be submitted as evidence before the Tribunal. The information and explanations contained in this letter are true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Yours sincerely,



Neill Wright

**NATIONS UNIES**  
**HAUT COMMISSARIAT**  
**POUR LES REFUGIES**  
Delegation pour le Sri Lanka



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## **AFFIDAVIT**

I hereby declare that I have witnessed the declaration made by Mr. Neill Wright, and confirm that the person who signed the statement is Mr. Wright, who in 1999 was the Head of the Unit at UNHCR Headquarters responsible for operations in Former Yugoslavia, and thus responsible for the collection of statistical information relating to operations.

I declare that Mr. Wright has stated to me that the contents of the written statement are, to the best of his knowledge and belief, true and correct; and that Mr. Wright was informed that if the content of the written statement is not true then he may be subject to proceedings for giving false testimony.

**Roshanthi de Mel**  
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Colombo, 01 March 2001

**UNHCR**United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees  
Haut Commissariat des Nations Unies pour les réfugiés

R0174907

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Date: 22 March, 2002

Notre/Our code:  
Votre/Your code:

Re:

**CERTIFICATION**

This is to certify that the attached affidavit made by Mr. Neill Wright was attested and executed by me the undersigned, on 01 March 2002. It was by a typographical error that the date was written as 01 March 2001. It should be read as 01 March 2002.

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Colombo, 22 March 2002